



**International  
Journal of Society, Culture & Language  
IJSCL**

Journal homepage: [www.ijscl.net](http://www.ijscl.net)  
ISSN 2323-2210 (online)

## **Mainland Chinese Students' Shifting Perceptions of Chinese-English Code-mixing in Macao**

**Kun Zhang<sup>1a</sup>**

### **ARTICLE HISTORY:**

Received December 2018  
Received in revised form February 2019  
Accepted March 2019  
Available online March 2019

### **KEYWORDS:**

Cross-border movement  
Sociolinguistic adaptation  
Code-mixing  
Language ideologies  
Identity

### **Abstract**

As a former Portuguese colony, Macao is the only region in China where Cantonese, a variety of Chinese, and English, an international language, are enjoying *de facto* official statuses, with Putonghua being a quasi-official language and Portuguese being another official language. Recently, with an increasing number of Mainland Chinese students crossing the border to pursue their tertiary studies in Macao, the question as to how they cope with the complex sociolinguistic situation there is of great importance. The present study focuses on how Mainland students perceived Chinese-English code-mixing during their sojourn. It has been found that in the process of their adapting to Macao, the Mainland students' attitudes towards Chinese-English code-mixing shifted due to the influence of local flexible ideologies about multilingualism. Accordingly, they could strategically resort to Chinese-English code-mixing, a linguistic practice negatively perceived on the Mainland, to socialize with people of different linguistic backgrounds when sojourning in Macao. In this process a flexible cross-border identity was constructed.

© 2019 IJSCL. All rights reserved.

<sup>1</sup> Assistant Professor, Email: [zhangkunbnu@gmail.com](mailto:zhangkunbnu@gmail.com)

Tel: +86-185-65859020

<sup>a</sup> Shenzhen University, China

## 1. Introduction

Recent years have witnessed a great number of Mainland Chinese students (hereafter Mainland students) going abroad to study. On the one hand, their experience of studying abroad equips them with knowledge that is required in our modern, competitive society. On the other hand, living abroad helps them broaden their visions and go internationalized when parts of the world are closely connected in one way or another. Although countries like the United States, Britain, Canada, Australia, and Germany, among others, are the most popular destinations for Mainland students, there are other places that are considered as a stepping stone to go abroad by them, among which Macao is one of the preferred destinations (Li & Bray, 2007).

In this paper, I focus on an under-researched group of Mainland students who are pursuing tertiary studies in Macao. Unlike the Chinese engaged in the transnational movement, the Mainland students investigated in this study are still staying in China, but it is not the Mainland China *per se* because the host society Macao is different from any other cities on the Mainland with which they are familiar due to historical reasons, and it is not under the direct jurisdiction of the People's Republic of China. In light of political, economic, and sociocultural differences between Macao and the Mainland, Macao has been renamed as a Special Administrative Region after its reunion with the motherland. In sociolinguistic terms, the historical development of Macao has cultivated a so-called 'quadrilingual (oral forms of Cantonese, Putonghua, Portuguese, and English) and triliterate' (written forms of Standard Written Chinese in traditional form, Portuguese, and English) (Bray & Koo, 2004) sociolinguistic context that has distinguished itself from the Mainland, where Putonghua is so dominant that the monoglot ideology overlies the diversity of society (Dong & Blommaert, 2009).

Against this sociolinguistic background, I focus on one of the significant changes on Mainland students' language ideologies in relation to their identity negotiation through a detailed analysis of metapragmatic data. I show that the cross-border experience leads Mainland students to re-evaluate the meanings of various linguistic resources, mainly code-mixing between Chinese and English, when sojourning in Macao, because of which they can strategically adjust their linguistic practices to fulfill the

expectations from the host society while not offending their counterparts on the Mainland. Concretely, I analyze the development and coalescence of linguistic ideologies that result in Mainland students' shifting perceptions of Chinese-English code-mixing, and discuss how these changes contribute to the construction and negotiation of a cross-border identity throughout the whole process.

To achieve the abovementioned goals, I situate the discussion of Mainland students' changing perceptions and practices of code-switching within the perspective of language ideologies with the hope of uncovering the interrelationships between Mainland students' changing perceptions, linguistic practices, and the negotiation of identities. Language ideologies, according to Silverstein (1979), are "sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use" (p. 193). This concept provides a useful framework for understanding Mainland students' code-mixing practice, because not only do language ideologies shape speakers' linguistic repertoires and regulate what languages should be used and how (Jourdan & Angeli, 2014), but also are "productively used in the creation and representation of various social and cultural identities" (Kroskrity, 2004, p. 509).

In particular, when people of a specific sociocultural group cross the border and start to sojourn in a host society, the language ideologies rooted in this group may be no longer compatible with the ones cultivated locally. Even in the same nation, as Schieffelin and Doucet (1998) have argued in the case of Haiti, "there is rarely a single ideology of language. Rather, one finds multiple, competing, and contradictory ideologies of language that are offered as the 'logic' for which features may be contested" (p. 286). For this group of Mainland students, even though Macao is part of China, because of political and sociocultural differences, Macao and the Mainland have nurtured different or even conflicting language ideologies. Therefore, this study attempts to dig out the multiple language ideologies in China, especially the conflicting ones between Macao and the Mainland through investigating a group of Mainland students' shifting perceptions of Chinese-English code-mixing and linguistic experiences, and then discloses how the changing language ideologies are used to create and negotiate Mainland students' cross-border identities.

## 2. Language Contact in Macao

Located on the western site of the Pearl River estuary, Macao is a Special Administrative Region of China where the political formula of "One Country, Two Systems" has been implemented since 1999, after more than one hundred years of occupation by the Portuguese Empire (Cheng, 1999). Compared with its eye-catching counterpart Hong Kong, Macao seems too tiny to be mentioned. According to the Direccção dos Serviços de Estatística e Censos (DSEC), the total land area of Macao is only 29.9 square kilometers (DSEC, 2013), but holds a population of around 552,503, among which 92.3% are ethnic Chinese and 7.7% are Macanese, Portuguese, and other ethnicities (DSEC, 2012). However small Macao is, that does not mean that it is not worth the study; rather, Macao's hundred years of contact with foreign countries and cultures has definitely made itself a stunning epitome of how a multilingual society has been formed.

Macao is a Cantonese-dominant society where Cantonese is widely used for social communication in various domains, such as home, work, education, and media. It is also enjoying the *de facto* official status because it is not only the most important language in daily communication, but also the most important language spoken in Legislative Council meetings and on official occasions. Besides Cantonese, Portuguese, English, Putonghua, Tagalog, and other Chinese dialects also play various roles in this society (Zhang, 2013, 2015). Because of the diverse use of different languages or language varieties, some sociolinguists have nicknamed Macao 'the museum of languages' (Wong, Long, & Sio, 1998).

When those languages or varieties of languages are used in the same society, there must appear the so-called language contact phenomenon, and one legacy of language contact is Chinese-English code-mixing, a significant linguistic practice pertinent to Macao Chinese (Li, 2005). It is believed that the current spread of Chinese-English code-mixing can be attributed to Macao's close connection with the outside world because of its economic take-off as well as to the influence from Hong Kong (Ching & Lau, 1991; Li, 2005). Ching (1995) further pointed out that intra-sentential code-mixing between Cantonese and English has been quite common, especially among educated Macao Chinese. It is hoped that by analyzing Mainland students' perceptions and linguistic practices, we

can gain a deep understanding of how their daily interaction has been shaped by the local Chinese's multilingual practices as well as how their cross-border movement has brought linguistic meanings to their sojourning experiences in Macao.

## 3. Research Design

The present study is part of a larger research project investigating Mainland students' linguistic practices, language ideologies, and identity construction in Macao. In the project, Mainland students' linguistic practices have been examined from both macro- and micro-perspectives, with the former focusing on how Mainland students make language choices in different domains (e.g., Fishman, 1972) and the latter on their mixed use of languages from an interpretive perspective (e.g., Heller, 2007). Results from the quantitative macro-approach will be presented and discussed in other papers. In this paper, I only focus on Mainland students' shifting perceptions of code-mixing.

Differing from the use of language survey in the macro-approach to studying language choice, the data collected in the micro-approach mainly come from semi-structured interviews. This qualitative method allows the researcher to "capture how those being interviewed view their world, to learn *their* terminology and judgments, and to capture the complexities of *their* individual perceptions and experiences" (Patton, 2002, p. 348; italics in original). In other words, to understand the sociocultural meanings of Mainland students' Chinese-English code-mixing practice, I adopted the semi-structured interview method to elicit their perceptions and language use experience. Meanwhile, the semi-structured interview also provides the lens through which Mainland students' code-mixing practice can be observed and identified directly when they interacted with the interviewer (i.e., the author of this paper). In total, 21 Mainland students participated in the interview.

The interviews were conducted in Putonghua, a language with which both my participants and I were familiar and comfortable. The average length of the interviews was around forty minutes. The interview was recorded by an MP3 recorder and transcribed by the researcher. When doing the transcription, I refrained from following the verbatim transcription conventions adopted by researchers of Conversation Analysis (Psathas, 1995), because the focus of my interview analysis was on the interpretation and

generation of meanings from the data rather than on its linguistic representation. Data analysis is an iterative, recursive, and ongoing process (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In this study, I adopted the thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) and followed their six phrases, from familiarizing myself with the data to producing the report.

#### 4. Mainland Students' Shifting Perceptions of Code-mixing

Based on the fieldwork notes and interview data, it has been found that Mainland students were mainly engaged in intra-sentential code-mixing between Chinese and English when sojourning in Macao. However, it is less clear why they code-mixed and how they perceived this type of linguistic practice. Therefore, in this and following sections, I trace how their perceptions of code-mixing have shifted after their arrival in Macao in comparison with their pre-arrival perceptions and then provide the ideological trajectory underpinning the change of this linguistic practice.

Among the interviewed Mainland students, many of them reported that starting to intersperse English in Chinese was the biggest linguistic practice change happening to them after they came to Macao, and they attributed the use of code-mixing either to Macao's unique sociolinguistic context, namely English-medium education or the people with whom they had contact. This is illustrated in Extracts 1 and 2 below ("R" refers to the researcher of this paper and "I" refers to the Mainland informants.).

##### Extract 1

R: Did your language use change upon your arrival in Macao?

I: Yes. When I was on the Mainland, I seldom spoke English because of the lack of English speaking-environment ... But after coming to Macao, there have been more opportunities to speak English, so I intersperse English in Putonghua...

*Informant #16, Female,  
Postgraduate, October 2, 2011*

##### Extract 2

R: Just now you mentioned that one of the changes on your language was that you started to intersperse English in Chinese. Right?

I: Yes, right. I did not code-mix

before coming to Macao.

R: But why do you start to code-mix in Macao?

I: Because a lot of people do that.

R: Whom you are referring to?

I: People around me. For example, some Mainland seniors do code-mix, as well as the local students. I picked up code-mixing subconsciously because I thought it's easy for me to learn this. It's just so easy for me to pick up this linguistic practice.

*Informant #05, Female,*

*Undergraduate, September 24, 2012*

Both informants acknowledged that it was after coming to Macao that they began to mix English in Chinese, but the reasons for doing so differed. In Extract 1, Informant #16 attributed her interspersing of English in Chinese to the influence of English-speaking environment. In her eyes, compared with Mainland China, Macao provided ample opportunities for the use of English, although in fact they were not as many as they expected and mainly restricted to the on-campus settings (Zhang, 2013). As suggested by other Mainland students, the English-speaking environment mainly referred to the campus settings where English was used as the main medium of instruction, so they had more exposure to English in class. More interestingly, some students reported that because of English-medium instruction, they acquired a great number of academic terminologies related to their disciplines, so when interacting with their peers, either local or Mainland, they got used to mixing them in the interactions. This is similar to what Li (2011) has observed on the campuses in Hong Kong and Taiwan, which he has termed 'medium-of-learning effect'.

Informant #05 in Extract 2, on the other hand, reported that her interspersing of English in Chinese was influenced by people around her, including both local students and senior Mainland students. Then she noticed that since it was easy to follow their way of speaking, she did the same. Indeed, the quick process of code-mixing pick-up experience reported by Informant #05 was shared by many other Mainland students. For this group of students, campus was the main location where their study and life related events or activities took place, so there was no doubt that they had more opportunities to interact with other students. However, when they just arrived in Macao and began their academic studies at the university,

they were not only in contact with the students of the same year but also the ones who were more senior than them. Compared with the seniors at the center of the student network on campus, the new Mainland students were just peripheral members who needed to join the seniors, either at students' clubs or associations, so not only did they need to learn the rules such as how to get along with others, but also needed to learn how to communicate with each other, and code-mixing was just one quick rule they could naturally acquire when interacting with their peers.

Thanks to Mainland students' quick adaptation, the mix of English in Chinese not only helped them adapt to the speaking style of senior local students and Mainland students, but also somewhat mitigated the communication difficulties caused by Mainland students' little knowledge of Cantonese or local students' relatively low Putonghua proficiency when they interact with local students. In other words, whenever Mainland students encountered linguistic barriers, they could resort to the mix of English in Chinese rather than pure English in interactions, because English could be used as a lingua franca between Mainland Putonghua speakers and local Cantonese speakers (cf. Sheng, 2004).

Nevertheless, not all Mainland informants had this high level of sensitivity to the changes on their linguistic practices. For instance, when some Mainland informants did not bring up the issue of code-mixing themselves, I explicitly asked them whether they code-mixed or not. Some of them often denied it in the first instance and then suggested that local students code-mixed a lot. But when asked to tell me how they expressed "I have a presentation today" in Chinese, not surprisingly, they all had difficulty in finding a proper equivalent in Chinese for the English expression "presentation" and confessed that they only used "presentation" in English because they never troubled to think about how to translate it into Chinese. Then they acknowledged that they did code-mix when interacting with either local students or other Mainland students to varied degrees. By contrast, when asked to comment on Macao Chinese's way of speaking, they used a Chinese term "中西合璧" ("a mixture of Chinese and Western styles" in English) to depict code-mixing, which indicates that they were very conscious of the different linguistic styles (Chen, 2008; Irvine, 2001) practiced in the host society and then tried to adapt themselves to it while sojourning in this

new sociolinguistic context.

It can be argued that although both local students and Mainland students code-mixed, it seems that for some Mainland students, this practice was more 'innate' to the local group rather than the Mainland group. In other words, the local Chinese were regarded as more "legitimate" (Abdi & Basarati, 2018; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005) code-mixers compared with Mainland the students themselves. This mentality is understandable given that Macao is a multilingual society where Cantonese and English are used side by side and Chinese-English code-mixing has almost become a norm. In a similar vein, in accounting for why Macao Chinese code-mixed, many Mainland students situated local people's linguistic practice into larger sociocultural and political contexts. That is, they were clearly aware of the sociolinguistic differences between Macao and the Mainland, especially attentive to Macao's uniqueness in terms of language and cultural contact. For example, Informant #12 shared his understanding of how Macao's history has contributed to the formation of multilingualism of the society, especially the code-mixing practice.

### Extract 3

R: Why does Cantonese keep updated? Why do Macao Chinese code-mix?

I: I think it is related to Macao's contact with foreign cultures. For example, Macao has Portuguese culture, and it is also influenced by Hong Kong where the British culture was dominant. At the very beginning, local people might be reluctant to accept the presence of English words in Cantonese, but gradually they get used to it.

*Informant #12, Male,  
Postgraduate, September 22, 2012*

It can be noted that when explaining why Macao Chinese code-mixed, Informant #12 conceived cultural contact as an important factor that contributed to the formation of Macao Chinese's multilingual practices. He observed that Macao was a place where both the Portuguese colonial culture and Anglicized Hong Kong culture played a role in cultivating the emergence of code-mixing practices, which, to a great extent, corresponds with what have been discussed in previous studies (e.g., Li, 2005). More interestingly, the informant also tried to guess how Macao

Chinese perceived the impact of multicultural contact on their linguistic behaviors by suggesting that they might be resistant to the mixing of English in Cantonese first but later it was internalized into them after years of contact.

By contrast, some Mainland informants attributed the limited use of Chinese and English code-mixing to the unbalanced English proficiency among Mainland Chinese and the dominant Chinese culture on the Mainland.

#### Extract 4

I: I think it will take quite a long time for Mainland Chinese to get used to mixing English into Chinese because China is so big. Besides, foreign cultures have not exerted great control in China. Maybe they have, but at least at the linguistic level, foreign cultures have not influenced our language.  
*Informant #06, Female,  
Undergraduate, October 12, 2011*

Here, what the informant observed in Extract 4 were the two factors that might influence people's acceptance and use of Chinese-English code-mixing on the Mainland. One was that because of the big and uneven population on the Mainland, code-mixing was not a linguistic practice widely accepted by most Chinese. This may be related to the fact that the deployment of Chinese-English code-mixing is much dependent on speakers' English proficiency. However, although English is being promoted nationwide and taught at all levels of education, the allocation of relevant learning and use resources is not equally distributed (Gil & Adamson, 2011). Therefore, people who have no or little English proficiency are less likely to accept this practice.

The second factor was that the influence of foreign cultures on Chinese culture and the Chinese language is still relatively weak, especially when the Chinese Government has taken action against the use of English in Chinese. In the past two centuries, especially after the open-door policy, because of the demand for new terms in the burgeoning fields such as humanities, social sciences, science, and technology, Chinese has borrowed heavily from European languages, namely English (Shi, 2000; Zuo, 2005). However, given that the written Chinese system is logossyllabic, the borrowed words must be transformed into Chinese

characters by means such as semantic transposition and phonetic transcription, and only few direct borrowings of foreign letter words have entered Chinese, such as GDP (Zuo, 2005).

Due to the different sociolinguistic contexts between Macao and the Mainland, people's attitudes towards Chinese-English mixing in the two places differed as well. For instance, some Mainland informants told me that before coming to Macao, they rarely interspersed English in Chinese not because they were not capable of mixing, but because Chinese-English code-mixers were usually negatively perceived with stereotyped labels such as "ostentatious" and "silly" stuck with mixers. Extract 5 below is a case in point.

#### Extract 5

R: Let me give you a clue. For example, just now you used an English word "international" to describe something. Did you do that before?  
I: No, no. I did not do that. You mean when I was on the Mainland?  
R: Yes.  
I: No, I did not, because if you spoke this way on the Mainland, people would judge you.  
R: How did they judge you?  
I: It gave people an impression that you did it ostentatiously. You ostentatiously mixed English and Chinese. But in Macao, it is okay because people around you all speak that way.  
*Informant #09, Female,  
Postgraduate, September 21, 2012*

In this extract, Informant #09 did not bring up the topic of code-mixing when she was asked to compare the differences between Macao students and Mainland students in terms of speaking styles. Then I used "international," an English word she mixed up in the prior interview, to elicit her discussion of this linguistic issue. Interestingly, she "took the bait" so I could follow up on it by asking whether she code-mixed or not on the Mainland. Not to my surprise, her answer was "no," as she explained she did not wish to be "judged" by others because "it gave people an impression that you did it ostentatiously."

Here, the expression “did it ostentatiously” equals “showing off” or “pretentious,” a negative attitude related to Chinese-English code-mixing identified among Mainland informants when they were asked to explain how this linguistic practice was perceived by people on the Mainland. Considering this negative perception, the Mainland students refrained from code-mixing when they interacted with their peers back on the Mainland either over the phone or in face-to-face communication. Excerpt 6 below is a typical account.

#### Extract 6

I: At first I code-mixed unconsciously when talking with my friends on the Mainland, but now I am aware of it. When I interact with my friends on the Mainland, sometimes English words will pop up in my mind. But I try not to speak English and to find its Chinese equivalents because I know they are studying on the Mainland where the medium of instruction is Chinese rather than English. I guess if I intersperse English, they will feel uncomfortable and think that I'm showing off in front of them.

*Informant #07, Female,  
Postgraduate, October 12, 2011*

The unconscious code-mixing practice reported by Informant #07 was common among many Mainland students in Macao because once they got used to it, it was difficult not to code-mix. Therefore, she managed to adjust her linguistic practice when interacting with her friends who were still on the Mainland since she did not want to make her friends “feel uncomfortable” and think that she was “showing off.” But what really made her friends feel uncomfortable and make them think that she was showing off? The answer given by the informant was the different medium of instruction education, as in her mind the English-medium education not only resulted in her interspersion of English in Chinese but also made her peers feel that she was somewhat superior to them because of the English-medium education she received in Macao.

In fact, behind the divergent views on the medium of instruction are Mainland Chinese's perceptions of the relationship between English and a distinctive social identity it indexes. That is, for Mainland students like Informant #07, studying in an English-medium environment

means having the opportunity to become Chinese and English bilinguals who are capable of switching between languages. According to Zhang (2000), this skilled bilingual behavior “serves as a mark of sophistication, and a token of superiority to those who have not yet acquired such proficiency” (p. 56). In order to oppress this sophisticated and superior identity associated with the use of English, the Mainland students consciously refrained from code-mixing when interacting with their peers back on the Mainland.

Then how did the Mainland students perceive the code-mixing between Chinese and English after they came to sojourn in Macao and started to code-mix themselves? In other words, did they have the same worry as linguistic purists (e.g., Chen, 1994) that the interspersion of English would pollute the Chinese language? These were the last two questions I asked regarding this practice in the interviews. It was found that in general, the Mainland students investigated in this study no longer regarded this issue as the black and white and rushed to a conclusion; rather, they were taking a more flexible view to look at it by situating the use of code-mixing into a specific social and cultural context. This change of perception is reflected in the following extract.

#### Extract 7

I: I can feel that I'm influenced by the ways that people from different regions communicate, so I'd rather not simply say Chinese-English code-mixing is good or bad. I would like to situate the use of it into specific situation and then judge whether it is proper or not.

*Informant #10, female,  
Undergraduate, September 21, 2012*

More specifically, most Mainland students held a more tolerant attitude towards Chinese-English code-mixing, particularly at the cross-cultural communication level. Some, however, seemed more concerned about the possible consequences brought about by this linguistic behavior, such as the use of English deteriorating cultural inheritance and integrity in written Chinese or the mixed use of English hindering first language acquisition. The following two interview extracts illustrate those views.

**Extract 8**

R: What do you think of code-mixing between Putonghua and English or Cantonese and English? Do you think the interspersion of English will pollute Chinese?

I: I think English cannot be interspersed in written Chinese. For example, you cannot write something like “今天我失败了考试” (I failed my examination today). You cannot do that because written language exactly reflects a nation's, region's or country's cultural inheritance. Code-mixing is prohibited. However, it does not matter if we mix English in oral communication because in an open society, we need to face the reality that different languages come into contact. It's not a bad thing if English is interspersed in Chinese. Frankly speaking, nowadays we have contact not only with Mainland Chinese but also with overseas Chinese and foreigners.

*Informant #12, Male,  
Postgraduate, September 22, 2012*

**Extract 9**

R: What do you think of code-mixing? Are you against this linguistic practice? Do you think the interspersion of English will pollute Chinese?

I: I think it depends. I feel that the interspersion of English should be avoided if children are at the stage of acquiring their mother tongue. When they grow up, they can change their linguistic practices based on where they are and who they work with so that it can help them communicate and shorten the distance.

*Informant #09, Female,  
Postgraduate, September 21, 2012*

The two informants shared the similar view that code-mixing was a natural consequence of culture contact, and in order to adapt to this fast changing society and to communicate well with people from various linguistic backgrounds, it was necessary to adjust their way of speaking so that the communication could become smoother and the relationships among people would be closer. However, in terms of the side effect of

this practice, the two informants' views varied because they focused on different aspects of code-mixing. For Informant #12, the interspersion of English in written Chinese should be prohibited because in his view “written language exactly reflected a nation's, region's or country's cultural inheritance.” This is the strongest view of purist linguistic ideology about the writing system (Woolard, 1998). For Informant #09, the mixing of English should be avoided when children were acquiring their native language (i.e., Chinese), which echoes the popular ideology about acquisition that languages should be studied separately or sequentially with their mother tongue coming first rather than simultaneously (Thompson, 1952). In other words, it was only after the children mastered the first language that they could learn another language and then adapted their linguistic practices to new social contexts in order to better communicate with others.

**5. Discussion**

This paper focuses on Mainland students' cross-border experience in Macao from a sociolinguistic perspective. As discussed elsewhere (Zhang, 2015), the Mainland students usually chose not to study Cantonese, the predominant language used in Macao when interacting with Macao Chinese either on or off the campus, because they deemed it less valuable and important compared with Putonghua, the only national official language in China, and English, the acclaimed international language that can index the so-called the flavor of globalization. Despite the fact that Cantonese, the most important local linguistic resource for Macao, was belittled and downplayed by the Mainland students featured in this study, they were found to be attracted to another important local linguistic resource (i.e., the mixed use of Chinese-English), and quickly picked up it with ease.

As Gal (1988) argues, code-mixing is “a conversational strategy used to establish, cross, or destroy group boundaries; to create, evoke, or change interpersonal relations with their accompanying rights and obligations” (p. 247). The discussion of Mainland students' Chinese-English code-mixing above seems to support this argument. When sojourning in Macao, the majority of Mainland students followed local people's way of speaking by mixing different languages, which not only helped them better communicate with the locals and other Mainland students but also helped cross the



fixed group boundaries established by the separate use of Putonghua and Cantonese. On the other hand, when staying in touch with their old friends or peers back on the Mainland, they consciously re-adjusted their linguistic practice to meet the expectations of the home society and avoided projecting a sophisticated and superior identity associated with the mixing of English so that they still could be regarded as in-group members.

All these suggest that the Mainland students were aware of the different linguistic conventions practiced in both home and host societies and could strategically use it to their advantage. More importantly, by examining Mainland students' interview discourses, it was found that accompanying the changes of linguistic practices were their shifting perceptions of Chinese-English code-mixing. In what follows, I situate the discussion into a larger political and sociocultural context, and argue how the development and coalescence of dominant linguistic ideologies cultivated on the Mainland and in Macao lead to Mainland students' shifting perceptions of Chinese-English code-mixing, which then in turn contributes to the negotiation of a cross-border identity.

On the Mainland, it is a purist language ideology that restricts the mixed use of English because the interspersion of English is usually regarded as a threat to pure and standard Chinese (Zhang, 2000). According to Thomas (1991), linguistic purism is defined as “[T]he manifestation of a desire on the part of a speech community (or some section of it) to preserve a language from, or to rid it of, putative foreign elements or other elements held to be undesirable” (p. 12). Here, Thomas' definition of linguistic purism is mainly directed at the level of lexicon, which is quite similar to what has been discussed regarding the interspersion of English in Chinese in China. That is, the Chinese Government, utilizing all the legal or administrative measures, tries to remove foreign elements from Chinese, namely English expressions interspersed in Putonghua, in order to guarantee that the use of Putonghua complies with the national standards. This tradition is particularly marked and consolidated with the launching of the *Law of the People's Republic of China on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language* (henceforth the Language Law) in 2000, in which it is explicitly stated that the use of the standard language (i.e., Putonghua) is closely tied to “the upholding of state sovereignty and national dignity, to unification

of the country and unity of the nationalities, and to socialist material progress and ethical progress” (Chinese Government, 2000).

Although the Language Law does not regulate the language use at individual level directly, it has paved the way for the Government to take the top-down approach to promoting standard Putonghua and utilize it to instill a strong Chinese identity amongst the Chinese people. For instance, in early 2014, the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television of China (SAPPRFT) issued a circular calling for the use of the standard language in the radio and television programs nationwide with the hope that the media acts as a good example in the promotion of Putonghua. At the beginning of this circular, it has been stated that using standard spoken and written language, namely Putonghua, is an important aspect of building up China's cultural confidence, enhancing China's soft power in culture, and increasing the cohesive force of the Chinese nation. More importantly, one of the articles in the circular stipulates that broadcasters and TV hosts should avoid mixing unnecessary foreign languages in their speech (SAPPRFT, 2014).

Theoretically speaking, it is the language ideology of externalization that has played a role in underpinning this linguistic purism. In explaining how externalization works in South Korea, Park (2008) argues:

Externalization picks out cases of hybridity such as appropriative uses of English and problematizes them as threats to the purity of Korean language, thereby clarifying and reestablishing the boundary between the two languages. In this way, Korean is framed as ‘our language’, while English is constructed as a language of an Other, whose usage is incompatible with a Korean identity. (p. 337)

Similar to what Park has found in South Korea, in China, English has been used as an aid to realize China's modernization in the era of globalization, but the Government, at the same time, prevents English from jeopardizing Chinese through legal or administrative measures, such as the launching of the Language Law mentioned above. Not only does this top-down approach consolidate China as a nation full of independence and integrity at the linguistic level, but also creates a boundary between the two

languages, both of which play a role in framing Chinese as “our language” and English as “theirs,” whose usage is not compatible with a Chinese identity. Influenced by this essentialist view of language and identity, most Mainland Chinese mock those who code-mix between Chinese and English as ‘fake foreigners’ (Yan, 2014).

Besides the influence of the Chinese Government’s language ideology of externalization on Mainland students, the language ideology of distinction pertinent to the English competence is also at work at the individual level (Lee, 2012). That is, on the Mainland, based on English competence, people are usually stratified into different social groups, which results in the fact that the use of English is dispreferred in private context when the two sides of interlocutors have demonstrated great gaps in terms of English competence. Though English is the most important foreign language on the Mainland, most Chinese have no or very limited English proficiency primarily because the allocation of English learning resources in China has always been uneven.

For instance, in the early twentieth century, only privileged Chinese elites had access to English education through missionary education at home or through overseas education (Zhang, 2012); nowadays, although English education is an essential component of education curriculum for all the students from primary school to college, it has only benefited a relatively a small number of students in well-resourced urban schools (Hu & Alsagoff, 2010), and people’s English learning and use opportunities still vary greatly because of the differences on geographical locations, socioeconomic status, and other social variables (Lam, 2005). Against this background, English competence has started to be used to index social groups that Mainland Chinese belong to. In particular, the mixed use of English in Chinese in private context indexes the linkage between speakers’ English competence and their social positioning in social stratification (Lee, 2012).

By contrast, the language ideologies about code-mixing in Macao are different from the Mainland ones because of its unique social and cultural contexts. As a meeting point of East and West, Macao is a multilingual society where Chinese (namely, Cantonese) and English have co-existed for centuries, not to mention the Chinese-English code-mixing as an outcome of language contact. In addition, the Macao

Government, either the colonial one or the post-colonial one, unlike the Chinese Government, has played a less interventionist role in regulating the local Chinese’s language use. Therefore, code-mixing between Chinese and English seems to be a norm in daily communication.

It is obvious that the Mainland students were confronted with two conflicting language ideologies during their sojourn in Macao. On the one hand, their perceptions of Chinese-English code-mixing were influenced by the dominant language ideologies on the Mainland where the essentialist view of languages has been prevalent at the national level and English competence indexes speaker’s social positioning in society at the individual level. On the other hand, influenced by the local ideology of flexible multilingualism (Creese & Blackledge, 2011), the Mainland students gradually took a less essentialist view of Chinese and English, especially in oral communication, with a focus on the suitability of context in which different languages were used. However, when they interacted with their peers on the Mainland, they became more sensitive to the social implication of English as they realized that at the personal level, the mixed use of English in Chinese not only projected an unintentional “pretentious” image but also indexed the access to the English-medium education and other resources that their peers did not have.

In conclusion, the Mainland students’ cross-border experience gave them an opportunity to re-evaluate the meanings of code-mixing so that they could adjust their linguistic practices strategically to meet the expectations from both the host and home societies. More importantly, influenced by the ideologies of flexible multilingualism cultivated in Macao, the Mainland students learnt how to freely deploy the rich linguistic resources around them to their advantage, through which a cross-border identity was constructed. This identity is fluid, flexible, and dynamic in a way that it not only demonstrated the rich Chinese-English bilingual resources that the Mainland students acquired and could skillfully deploy during their sojourn in Macao, but also projected the abundant social and cultural capital they mastered behind their movement. Compared with the majority of Mainland Chinese back home, they were the lucky ones who were able to go outside of the Mainland, receive the English-medium education, and experience a unique culture in Macao. As Wang (2013) says, “the Chinese/English bilingual

group [in China] may not be statistically dominant, but it is probably sociological dominant due to its material and cultural advantages" (p. 8). The Mainland students discussed in this study just belonged to this sociologically dominant group.

## References

- Abdi, R., & Basarati, A. (2018). Legitimation in discourse and communication revisited: A critical view toward legitimizing identities in communication. *International Journal of Society, Culture & Language*, 6(1), 86-100.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Bray, M., & Koo, R. (2004). Postcolonial patterns and paradoxes: Language and education in Hong Kong and Macao. *Comparative Education*, 40(2), 215-239.
- Bucholtz, M., & Hall, K. (2005). Identity and interaction: A sociocultural linguistic approach. *Discourse Studies*, 7(4/5), 585-614.
- Chen, E. Q. (1994). On the standards of lexicalization in bilingual contact. In E. Q. Chen (Ed.), *Bilingualism and bidialectism* (pp. 16-33). Hong Kong, China: Sinology Press.
- Chen, K. H. Y. (2008). Positioning and repositioning: Identity negotiation of overseas returning bilinguals in Hong Kong. *Multilingua*, 27(1/2), 57-75.
- Cheng, C. M. B. (1999). *Macau: A cultural Janus*. Hong Kong, China: Hong Kong University Press.
- Chinese Government. (2000). *Law of the People's Republic of China on the standard spoken and written Chinese language*. Retrieved from [http://www.npc.gov.cn/englishnpc/Law/2007-12/11/content\\_1383540.htm](http://www.npc.gov.cn/englishnpc/Law/2007-12/11/content_1383540.htm)
- Ching, C. F. (1995). *Language and communication*. Macao, China: Macao Foundation.
- Ching, C. F., & Lau, S. P. (1991). Trilingual communication and the healthy development of the Chinese language in Macao. *Studies of the Chinese Language*, 1, 41-46.
- Creese, A., & Blackledge, A. (2011). Separate and flexible bilingualism in complementary schools: Multiple language practices in interrelationship. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43(5), 1196-1208.
- Dong, J., & Blommaert, J. (2009). Space, scale and accents: Constructing migrant identity in Beijing. *Multilingua*, 28(1), 1-24.
- DSEC. (2012). *Results of 2011 population census*. Retrieved from <http://www.dsec.gov.mo/Statistic.aspx?NodeGuid=8d4d5779-c0d3-42f0-ae71-8b747bdc8d88>
- DSEC. (2013). *Yearbook of statistics 2014*. Retrieved from <http://www.dsec.gov.mo/Statistic.aspx?NodeGuid=d45bf8ce-2b35-45d9-ab3a-ed645e8af4bb>
- Fishman, J. (1972). *The sociology of language*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Gal, S. (1988). The political economy of code choice. In M. Heller (Ed.), *Code-switching: Anthropological and sociolinguistic perspectives* (pp. 245-264). Berlin, Germany: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Gil, J., & Adamson, B. (2011). The English language in Mainland China: A sociolinguistic profile. In A. W. Feng (Ed.), *English language education across Greater China* (pp. 23-45). Buffalo, NY: Multilingual Matters.
- Heller, M. (2007). Bilingualism as ideology and practice. In M. Heller (Ed.), *Bilingualism: A social approach* (pp. 1-24). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hu, G. W., & Alsagoff, L. (2010). A public policy perspective on English medium instruction in China. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 31(4), 365-382.
- Irvine, J. T. (2001). "Style" as distinctiveness: The culture and ideology of linguistic differentiation. In P. Eckert & J. R. Rickford (Eds.), *Style and sociolinguistic variation* (pp. 21-43). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Jourdan, C., & Angeli, J. (2014). Pijin and shifting language ideologies in urban Solomon Islands. *Language in Society*, 43(3), 265-285.
- Kroskrity, P. V. (2004). Language ideologies. In A. Duranti (Ed.), *A companion to linguistic anthropology* (pp. 496-517). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Lam, A. S. L. (2005). *Language education in China: Policy and experience from 1949*. Hong Kong, China: Hong Kong University Press.
- Lee, A. W-H. (2012). *Language ideology of English: Its relation with linguistic ownership* (Unpublished master's thesis). National Taiwan Normal University, Taiwan.
- Li, D. C. S. (2005). The state of bilingualism in Macau SAR. *Journal of Macau Studies*, 28(5), 110-114.
- Li, D. C. S. (2011). Lexical gap, semantic incongruence, and medium-of-instruction-

- induced code-switching: Evidence from Hong Kong and Taiwan. In E. A. Anchimbe & S. A. Mforteh (Eds.), *Postcolonial linguistic voices: Identity choices and representations* (pp. 215-240). Berlin, Germany: de Gruyter Mouton.
- Li, M., & Bray, M. (2007). Cross-border flows of students for higher education: Push-pull factors and motivations of mainland Chinese students in Hong Kong and Macau. *Higher Education, 53*, 791-818.
- Park, J. S.-Y. (2008). Two processes of reproducing monolingualism in South Korea. *Sociolinguistic Studies, 2*(3), 331-346.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Psathas, G. (1995). *Conversation analysis: The study of talk-in-interaction*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage.
- SAPPRFT. (2014). *The use of standard Chinese in radio and television programs*. Retrieved from [http://news.xinhuanet.com/2014-01/03/c\\_118826318.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/2014-01/03/c_118826318.htm)
- Schieffelin, B. B., & Doucet, R. C. (1998). The "real" Haitian creole: Ideology, metalinguistics, and orthographic choice. In B. B. Schieffelin, K. A. Woolard & P. V. Kroskrity (Eds.), *Language Ideologies* (pp. 285-316). Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Silverstein, M. (1979). Language structure and linguistic ideology. In P. R. Clyne, W. F. Hanks & C. L. Hofbauer (Eds.), *The elements: A parassession on linguistic units and levels* (pp. 193-247). Chicago: Chicago Linguistic Society.
- Sheng, Y. (2004). *Languages in Macao: Past, present and future*. Macao, China: Macao Polytechnic Institute.
- Shi, Y. W. (2000). *Chinese loan words*. Beijing, China: The Commercial Press.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Thomas, G. (1991). *Linguistic purism*. London, England: Longman.
- Thompson, G. G. (1952). *China psychology*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
- Wang, J. (2013). *Code-switching as social practice: A systematic functional approach to the Chinese/English code-switching in Chinese newspapers*. Guangzhou, China: Sun Yan-Sen University Press.
- Wong, Y., Long, U. S., & Sio, C. I. (Eds.) (1998). *Macau: The museum of languages*. Hong Kong: Hoi Fung Publishing House.
- Woolard, K. A. (1998). Introduction: Language ideology as a field of inquiry. In B. B. Schieffelin, K. A. Woolard & P. V. Kroskrity (Eds.), *Language Ideologies* (pp. 3-47). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Yan, X. (2014). A meta-discursive analysis of online comments of Chinese netizens on Huang Xiaoming's appropriation of English. *Language, Culture and Curriculum, 27*(2), 151-162.
- Zhang, A. L. (2000). Language switches among Chinese/English bilinguals. *English Today, 16*(1), 53-56.
- Zhang, K. (2010). *A sociolinguistic study of Mainland Chinese students in Macao: Language choice, language attitudes, and identity* (Unpublished master's thesis). University of Macau, Macao.
- Zhang, K. (2013). Mainland Chinese students' English use in Macao. *English Today, 29*(2), 54-59.
- Zhang, K. (2015). *Language choice, language ideologies, and identity: A sociolinguistic study of Mainland Chinese students in Hong Kong and Macao* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, China.
- Zhang, W. (2012). Chinese-English code-mixing among China's netizens. *English Today, 28*(3), 40-52.
- Zuo, X. L. (2005). Language planning with respect to English into Chinese. *Terminology, 11*(2), 283-292.